

RVT Talk Piece

Strategies for Veterinary Technicians: A Path to Empowerment and Professional Fulfillment

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Registered veterinary technicians (RVT) can find themselves facing unique challenges in the workplace, including affecting changes, coping with feelings of undervaluation, and truly feeling heard when ideas are brought forward to their superiors. My hope here is to aid RVTs by sharing skills and strategies I have learned through my journey as an RVT and a counselling student to address these issues effectively and work towards enhancing their professional well-being.

The following are what I have not only found effective within my own career as an RVT, but also with clients I have counselled through similar challenges.

Building Resilience

To begin with the definition of resilience when viewed through the lens of a counsellor is “the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands (APA site).”

Having resilience doesn't mean that you will be left with no stress or struggles in your life, it instead empowers you to withstand and learn from difficult experiences (APA site).

There are 4 core components of building resilience, and they are: connection, wellness, healthy thinking, and meaning (APA site).

Building connections can be accomplished by seeking out colleagues or even a mentor within your place of work that has displayed strong empathetic skills to be able to discuss your frustrations with. Through this they also may help to validate what you are feeling, which in turn also aids in building resilience, by letting you know you are not alone. As RVT's it could also be useful to become a part of the leadership team, management team, or mentor others to form connection as well as to have your voice be heard and to actively participate in making changes within your workplace.

Wellness can take on many forms since stress itself is not only mental it is physical as well. So, by ensuring to take care and pay special attention to nutrition, exercise, daily hydration, and sleep patterns for us in the same way we would for our patients we work towards taking care of our bodies. For mental health wellness leaning into mindfulness through such outlets as meditation, journaling, and yoga allows for one to face their distresses from a place of hope (APA site). One must too be reminded that partaking in maladaptive practices of the overuse of

alcohol consumption and drug use may not be the best resources to manage one's stress or ensure wellness.

How one thinks can affect how you feel as well as how resilient you may be when faced with a struggle. It is not unusual as humans let alone RVT's to catastrophize difficulties that we are faced with and to have the feeling that others may be against us especially when it comes to evoking change within our places of work.

Finding meaning is a way of working towards your purpose and to aid in being able to affect the changes you would like to see take place within your workplace and the RVT profession. You can do this by mentoring, teaching, or assisting in training others within your hospital. You could also look at volunteering for the BCVTA or other veterinary associations to aid in evoking the changes that you are passionate about. Another way is by looking within and asking yourself "what might I do to improve the situation that is causing me so much frustration?" Through this it allows you to play an active role in what you yourself can control as opposed to relying solely on others to initiate the change. This also allows for explorations around self-discovery and can allow for better working relationships with your colleagues and members of your management team.

Developing Assertiveness Techniques

Developing assertiveness skills can help veterinary technicians to communicate their needs and boundaries effectively within their workplaces. They then are able to assert their opinions and advocate for themselves with confidence and stand a greater chance of being valued and heard. (Alberti & Emmons, 2008)

Stress Management Techniques: Such techniques as deep breathing exercises or progressive muscle relaxation can be useful in helping veterinary technicians to cope with work-related stressors and frustrations. By incorporating mindfulness-based interventions and self-care practices into daily routines, can also assist in enhancing resilience and emotional well-being. (Davis & Hayes, 2011)

Overall, it is then apparent how these skills and strategies can play a very vital role in supporting veterinary technicians in addressing workplace challenges, and how to navigate these workplace dynamics effectively, advocate for their needs, and cultivate a sense of fulfillment in their veterinary careers. Despite best efforts VT's may still face challenges in having their opinions valued and heard in the workplace. In such situations, it is important for VT's to practice self-care and seek support from their colleagues, professional networks, and consider seeking help from a mental health professional. By engaging in activities that promote mental and emotional well-being, such as exercise, mindfulness, and hobbies, VT's can better cope with feelings of frustration and disappointment. It can also be useful to seek out professional

development opportunities, such as attending conferences or workshops, to expand their knowledge and skills and build their confidence in advocating for change.

By employing effective communication strategies, taking on leadership roles, practicing self-care, seeking support from colleagues and mentors, and pursuing professional development opportunities, VT's can influence positive changes in their workplace. By taking proactive steps to advocate for themselves and their profession, VT's can create a more supportive and fulfilling work environment for themselves and their colleagues. (Smith, 2018) (Jones, 2020) (STARTING AT OVERALL)

References

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3. Davis, D.M., & Hayes, J.A. (2011) What are the benefits of mindfulness? *A practice review of psychotherapy-related research*. *Psychotherapy*, 48(2), 198-208.
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5. Smith, J. (2018). *Communication strategies for veterinary technicians*. *Veterinary Nursing Journal*, 33(2), 87-94

APA Website

<https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience#:~:text=Resilience%20is%20the%20process%20and,to%20external%20and%20internal%20demands>.

<https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience/building-your-resilience> resilience piece

Resources

<https://positive.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Assertiveness-Formula.pdf>

<https://positive.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Challenging-Assertiveness-Interactions.pdf>

<https://positive.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Assertiveness-Review.pdf>